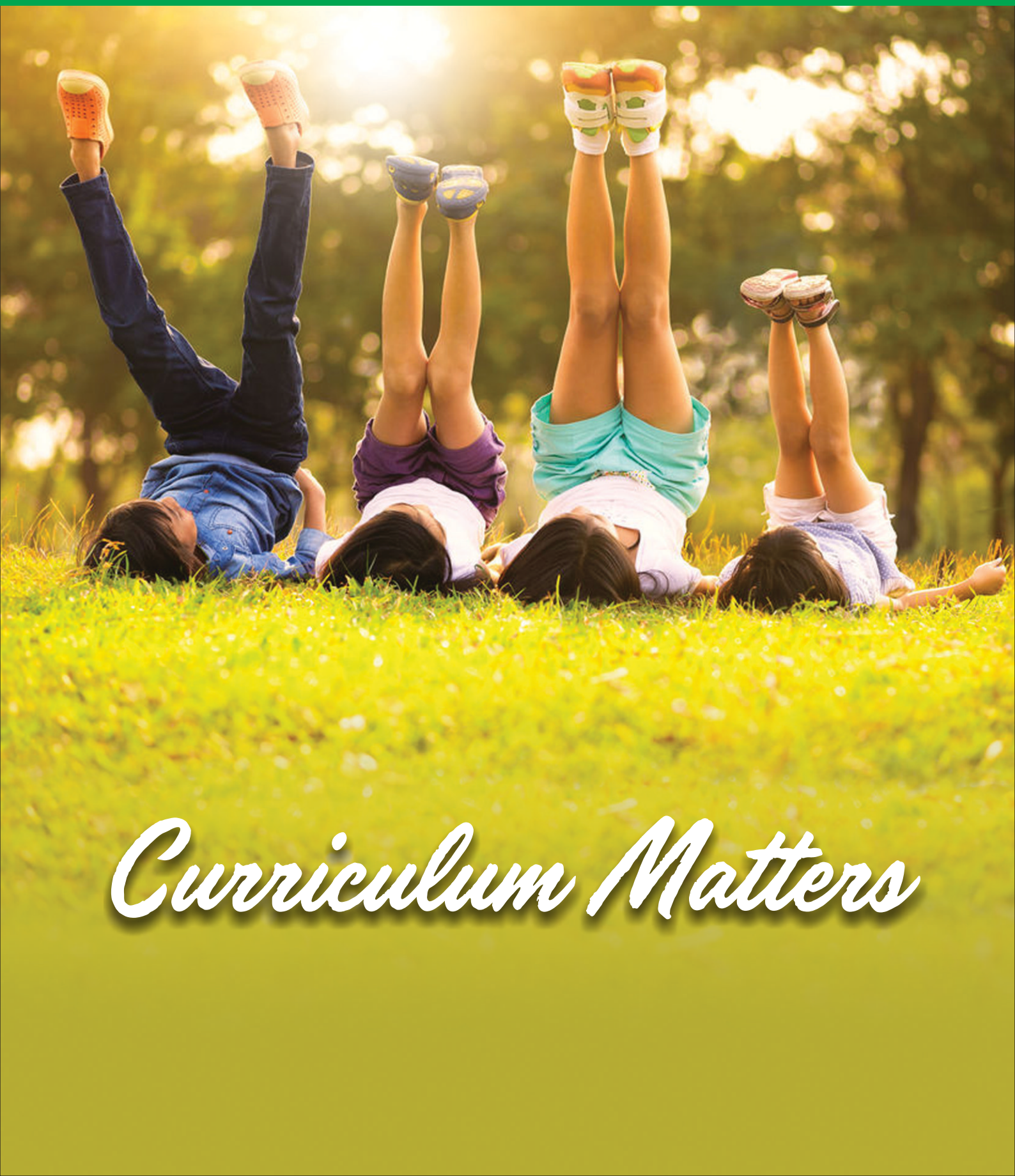




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ENGAGE

ISSUE 2 : 2017-18



Curriculum Matters



From the Editor.....

A cheerful hullo to all of you, and a very happy and peaceful 2018 too!

“The first five last the rest of their life”.

Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age six have a major impact on their future life chances. Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Besides good parenting, high quality early learning provides the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.' However, we acknowledge after observing and listening to the ensuing confusion on curriculum linked philosophies, approaches, conflicting ideologies, fads and fancies and the like, that a deeper dive into "what children are learning and how" is needed.

We are pleased to share our theme for the 2nd issue of 2017-18, **“Curriculum Matters”**, which begins the journey to navigate us through the early years curriculum nuts and bolts. We shall continue with the same theme for the next few newsletters too, realizing that the big hairy monster that curriculum is projected to be and weighty as such, requires several deep dives. We hope that we can hear from practitioners on good practices and experiences. We implore you to open the discourse in your respective settings and discussion groups. Some perspectives shared here are just that, “perspectives”, but based on experiences and practices that work, some of them strongly rooted in theory and valid research.

For this issue, we have some of this and some of that but something for every reader of our small but growing AECED community. We have a narrative poem guiding us on the curriculum aptly titled **“Curry-Culum”** which brings forth what curriculum ought to be and why leaving plenty of food for thought and reflection. We shall engage with **“Science in the Early Years”** essentially nurturing the innate explorer, investigator and discoverer in young children, thereafter, **“Carpe Diem”- Seize the Day**, shares the experiences garnered in designing and implementing a curriculum for young children caught in the migration cycle of construction industry. This Newsletter also contains a NCERT Award winning project report focusing on integral but oft overlooked focus, **'Facilitating the transition of Children from Pre-primary to Primary Section'** bringing forth parent and teacher work together.

Since the curriculum besides being planned and 'implemented' also has a parallel hidden curriculum, the unintended or not formally intended which largely gets picked up from the environment and from significant caregivers like the teachers at preschool too, e.g., norms, values, beliefs, habits, behaviours to name the essential few, hence teachers to be able to contribute positively to the child's development in far long lasting and meaningful ways through this natural and hidden curriculum and to really enjoy what they do, need to be in positive mental health. **'You can't pour from an Empty Cup'** sheds light on a teacher nurturing and retaining her positive mental health.

Our regular offerings remain as such with some interesting food for thought. **Sound Bytes** in particular bring forth voices from the field in the form of a bunch of early childhood trainees sharing their hopes and aspirations as they get ready to embark on their journey as preschool teachers. We welcome your inputs for the next newsletter on curriculum matters, could be an action research report, an innovation, good practice sharing or bits and bytes.

We have much work to do and the start of a new year brings renewed energy, resolution and a stronger “can do” spirit! But whatever you do, don't forget to eat healthy, move more, breathe deep, stay positive, have fun and be kind!

‘With warmth and love’

Monisha

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'Curriculum Matters'

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Curry- Culum

- Monisha Singh Diwan

Trailer of our present day Early Childhood Education System!

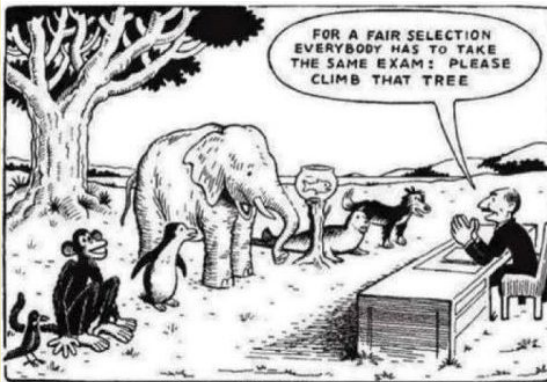


Distasteful?
Bitter Pill?



Painful?

"First the birth canal, and now preschool!
When does this end?"



Setting up for Failure?

How well do we really know our learners- their ages and stages, their rights and needs, their interests and inclinations, their cultures and contexts, their learnings and leanings?

What is Curriculum?

- "The curriculum consists of the knowledge and skills to be acquired in the educational program as well as the plans for experiences through which children's learning will take place." *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs, NAEYC (2009)*
- "Curriculum – the knowledge and skills teachers are expected to teach and children are expected to learn, and the plans for experiences through which learning will take place." *The Intentional Teacher by Ann Epstein (2007)*

Although definitions for curriculum are many, the valid ones essentially communicate that curriculum is:

"goals and plans for children to acquire skills, knowledge, competencies and beginnings of a more consistent disposition through activities, experiences and opportunities"

Defining goals and content for ECE has always been an issue in India due to the lack of substantive guidance and monitoring, too many scattered options, lack of vision at times as well as the diversity in contexts, ability and intent. Deciding on the extent of planning is another issue that emerges, with emerging conflict on more detailed plans to the extent of being prescriptive to the other end of a non-prescriptive and flexible curriculum with more "here and now" context specificity. And there are still other settings where anything goes and helter-skelter is the "plan", ruefully so or where a curriculum exists but looks like a "mini" grade 5 curricula almost.



Furthermore, aligning the curriculum goals and contents with the evolving 21st century and the future needs of society at large can be challenging, especially with changes, such as increased conflict, increasing migration, variation in family size, composition and work life dynamics, environment issues, advances in technology, health and nutrition problems.

**But time we foreground these realities
as they are the most important part of the curriculum,
along with dotting the i's, crossing the t's and counting 1,2,3's.**

**So while we grapple with so much around,
Let's not forget that most important sound.**

I am the child, I am here and now,

Plan well for me,

From home to school, you see.

It does make a difference, O teacher, what you're cooking, this Curriculum Curry!!!



**Read on some nuggets,
Essentially so,
We'll surely add more,
Along the road as we go...**

The science of early childhood I say, tells us an important million things or two,
That the first five years last a lifetime, oh yes, they most certainly do.
Let's start with first thousand days where so much should be happening at home and care,
Stimulation, nutrition, health and protection,
Parenting is hands full and minds on and clap for the most important job, parents please take a chair.
Now let's focus on those essential preschool years through,
Where phenomenal learning through play should be happening and children are getting ready for school too.
Neuroscience tells us that experiences build brain architecture,
it's the positive ones we want here as toxic stress through neglect, abuse and strife will delay and shake
and create that long lasting rupture.
Educators and caregivers play such an important role here,
Joining hand in hand the parents and the community, now and here.
90% of the brain development happens before age 5,
13% return on investment for every dollar spent on early childhood,
90-100% chance of development delays when children experience severe risk factors,
etc. are numbers abundant you've heard surely,
to help us partake this journey more responsibly and more meaningfully...

So, what's that lifetime we mean to help create and elevate?

If children are raised with love, compassion and empathy
and learn beautifully about themselves, their emotions and others too through meaningful interaction,
They are empathic, resolve conflict peacefully and value themselves and people far and around,
As they grow and forge and nurture relationships that abundantly abound.

So, how would the world be if this was true for so many not just a few?

If children are raised to follow their nature and explore, and inquire,
And experience hands on something real and tangible to keep alit that learning fire ,
They invent, innovate, research and find solutions which don't abate,
They rely over time on hypothesis, research and analysis, find justifiable answers and create.

So, how would it be if positive innovations and solutions are many for so many of the issues assailing the world?

If children are raised to connect with the earth every day,
through play outdoors, gardening, smelling, looking, tasting, touching and feeling,
They learn to love, value and protect the environment even in its present strife,
To conserve, protect, better, have and hold for life.

So, how would it be if our next generation were conservationists, minimalists and thoughtful consumers?

If children were moving, running, jumping, rolling and hopping,
In the class, out of the class, in the corridors, here, there, everywhere
They will be fitter, stronger, happier and healthier
And movement will become a part of their life forever

So, how would it be if people were fitter, with more energy and healthier hormones?

If children were eating healthy, given right nutrition choices,
Because they eat and learn about the right things their body needs,
And food at school is similar to food possible to avail at home,
They would make that choice that will bode well and will continue as a habit.

So, how would it be if people were having less nutrition linked issues ?

If children were singing songs, listening to stories, reading books, making marks to express and playing with words sometimes,
In languages known, a little familiar, new and sometimes nonsensical too at the core,
They would love those languages, importantly their mother tongue and the familiar,
And would emerge hundreds more.

So, how would it be if people were able to understand and express in varied ways to learn and communicate effectively?

If children were engaging with numbers, counting and shapes,
But also classification, seriation, patterns, and estimation and data, volumes and measuring tapes ,
If they were to learn this in nature, through games, music and art,
Math would be magical indeed and not through the years be the hated bulls eye for the dart.

So, how would it be if all people had good basic math skills and did not relegate it as a “phobia” and some excelled, reveled and enjoyed it?

If children were truly valued as people with rights and choices,
In learning spaces, and sometimes the curriculum focus too, we would hear less of the teachers and more of their voices,
Curriculum in the early years settings with experiences, routines, transitions and interactions, has the child at the heart,
and relationships with teachers/caregivers, the parents and the environment as the scaffold and support till the end and right from the start.

Last words...

Curriculum starts with a plan based on a deep rooted effective philosophy,
That guides people engaged to move together in gentle harmony.

At the heart of this philosophy guided by so many, should be the belief that all children are able,
And their experiences need to be rooted in their development, context and culture to positively empower
and enable.

The child is a whole being and needs focus on the physical, cognitive, linguistic, creative,
social/emotional too

hence curriculum needs to be Whole-istic and comprehensive too.

The child has different unique abilities and inclinations,
hence the curriculum needs to be IN-clusive, the final juxtaposition.

It takes a village to raise a child as tell us wisdom of yore,

hence the curriculum needs to bring in others to contribute and needs to be In-tegrated even more.

The child is a world citizen and hence demands the best from us and what is best for her,
so let's raise ourselves to commit to that, and evolve to what we can, should and will from what we did
and as we were...

***Curriculum is after all a Curry and a curry is as good as its ingredients, discerningly picked, sorted,
cleaned, chopped, tossed, sizzled, stirred, cooked, garnished and served AND chewed, savoured,
digested and absorbed...***

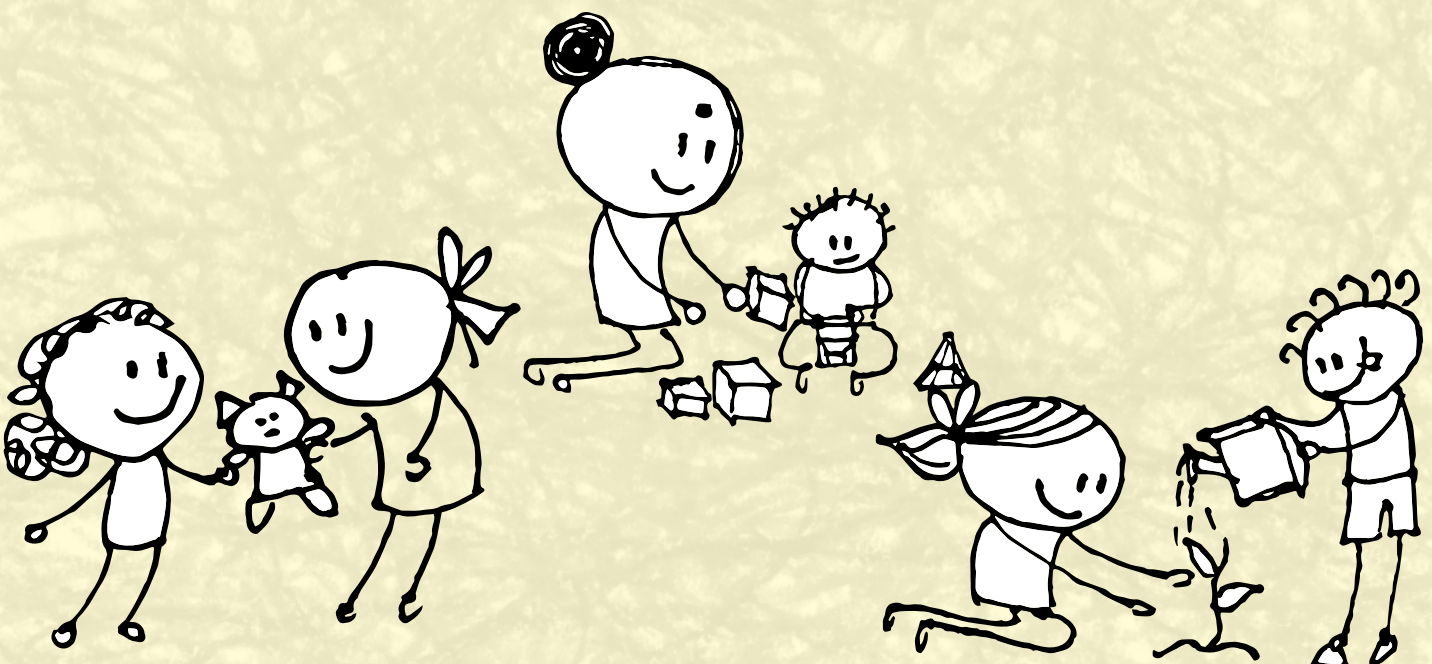
Bon Appetit!

Some curriculum approaches which could serve as a reference as you work on your curriculum:

1.http://www.wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/national_ecce_curr_framework_final_03022014%20%282%29.pdf (National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework, Ministry of Woman and Child Development, Government of India)

2.<https://www.oecd.org/edu/school/31672150.pdf>
{Five Curriculum Outlines (Experiential Education, High Scope, Reggio Emilia Approach, Te Whāriki, Swedish Curriculum)}

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Science in the Early Years



- *Purvi Vora*

John Locke, famous English philosopher and physician, has quoted, “Curiosity in children is but an appetite for knowledge. One great reason why children abandon themselves wholly to silly pursuits and trifle away their time insipidly is, because they find their curiosity balked, and their inquiries neglected. “This could not be truer than in our schooling system. Little children are natural explorers, curious about EVERYTHING. The desire to explore, to touch, to break open, to put together, to shake and rattle, to smell, to feel, to taste... is innate in every human child. Yet, we systematically stifle, neglect and discourage this exploration and curiosity. We “balk” at their honest questions, and as students grow older, they stop wondering, questioning, observing and exploring the world around them. What a tragedy!

As practitioners committed to life-long learning, and as educators in charge of our youngest students, the responsibility to nurture this sense of wonder is wholly on us; what better way to do this than through science- the study of the world around us!

In our “Science in the Early Years” workshop, we had investigated different ways in which teachers can design age-appropriate activities that encourage children to explore the world around them. Two of the key themes discussed throughout this day were:

- To understand the developmental milestones of our little humans
- To understand the 'nature of science'

Both these understandings are crucial when working with kindergarteners.

What a four to six-year-old can do, understand or communicate depends on the cognitive, motor, linguistic and socio-emotional milestones she has achieved. (For example, a four-year-old may be able to identify and name properties of different objects- like hardness, colour, shape, texture, etc.), while a six-year-old can also understand that properties can be changed by doing certain things to certain objects (e.g., freezing, bending, etc.)- an understanding that a 4-year-old may not be able to fully grasp.

Teachers who work with this age group need to understand their students' milestones if they want to design appropriate activities that excite their students, engage them and further their learning. For example, 3-4 year olds can follow simple rules but usually like to win. So setting up competitive games with a clear winner in your ECE classroom may not be the best idea, unless you want a few, very upset toddlers. Most ECE programs will focus on teaching the developmental milestones of young children but as teachers, we often forget them when we enter our classrooms. We strongly encourage schools to include these in their beginning of year professional development, every year if necessary, just as a reminder to all ECE teachers of who they are dealing with!








The second important theme that we explored in our workshop was around the 'nature of science.' What is different about teaching EVS from teaching math or language? Should teachers do something different when exploring EVS topics like “my body, my community, transport, food, etc.” versus when they teach Phonics or counting? We believe so! Science is unique in many ways and has a particular 'nature' which lends itself to providing students with opportunities to learn skills they do not learn in other subjects.

- **Science is empirical**
in nature and science teachers teach little kids that they can use their senses to observe the world around them and collect data. E.g., count how many types of cars pass by in 5 min, how different parts of a plant

feel, how different foods taste, how their own face is similar or different to their friend's, how many types of sounds they can hear in a song, how different types of percussion sound different. As students explore using their senses, they learn new vocabulary, improve their observation skills and slowly move from exploration investigation.

- **Science explains and predicts**

Preschool teachers all over the country do simple experiments like sink and float in their classrooms. But how many of us ask students to PREDICT before they OBSERVE? It is a matter of designing a simple worksheet like the one given below for students to predict, observe and compare their predictions to their observations. Upon observing a number of objects sink or float, teachers can ask students to HYPOTHESIZE as to why certain objects sink or float. Students may give a variety of hypotheses- based on size, based on weight or even shape. The teacher then provides a new set of experiences to test those hypotheses.

OBJECT		PREDICTION		OBSERVATION	
	STONE	S	F	S	F
	FEATHER	S	F	S	F
	ORANGE	S	F	S	F
	SPOON	S	F	S	F
	FOIL	S	F	S	F
	LEAF	S	F	S	F
	LID	S	F	S	F

- **Scientists ask questions, offer explanations and share information.**

Develop a sense of enquiry and provide students with opportunities to ask questions by design. Little children are FULL of why and how questions anyway.

Set up a “Little Scientist” station in your classroom where you can display something new twice a week- things that are ordinary, strange, funky, silly, useful, broken- anything that will pique students' curiosity and get them talking about it and asking questions, or figuring out how it works. You can do this during play time or as a routine at the beginning or end of the day.

You can ask students to bring something they made, found in nature or collected from an adult for a “show and tell.” Encourage students to share something new they have learned that week about the topic you are exploring.

Ask students to illustrate or talk about how something works.

Create a list of their questions about the topic you are exploring (no matter HOW SILLY) and invite an 'expert' to answer them.

Science is not just something that scientists do. It is a way of knowing and exploration- a natural extension to what our preschool students do every, single waking moment. At Renissance Education, we feel passionately that schools should be places where children are not stifled, their inquiries not neglected, their curiosities not balked at, their questions not considered silly ... but that their natural, inner scientists are applauded, celebrated and encouraged.

And it all really begins in Kindergarten.

Purvi Vora is the Founding Partner at Renissance Education LLP.

Before you read, ponder upon.....

- Can we predict the vulnerable street children's duration of attendance while teaching them?
- Is it so for children at beggar's home?
- Is the situation similar at night care centre for red light areas?
- Do brick kilns, sugarcane farms, construction industry have similar situations?
- What about orphanages and juvenile remand homes, is it any different?



“Carpe Diem” Seize the Day

- Rekha Menon

How does one plan or design or execute an effective curriculum for marginalised children? In light of the above questions, I would like to share my experience of designing and implementing a curriculum for young children caught in the migration cycle of construction industry.

Do reflect.....

“Sachin has a smile on his face from ear to ear as he adds the last few touches to his molded cellphone. He meticulously sculpts the clay to make his very own desired gadget.

Sachin is ten years old and has recently lost his father. He helps his mother operate the tea stall within the construction site. His mother lets him attend the day care facility during lean hours of business or holidays at construction sites. Today is one of those days.”

Migration

As per UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), the concept of migration includes the movement of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people as well as economic migrants.

Opportunities and threats of migration affecting young children

Migration provides opportunities for economic growth, learning new skills and labour apprenticeship, which are essential for global development. However threats regarding migration adversely affect children caught in the ambit in terms of health, nutrition and education. By lack of immunisations, malnourishment, sickness, mortality, no access to safe drinking water and improper sanitation leads to poor health.

With regard to education the lack of anganwadis/creches leads to children near the place of work as well as high ratio of school dropout leads to becoming easy victims of trafficking, sex industry and child labour as stated in the Resource Book for Commissions for Protection of Child Rights 2016.

My interactions with the children of migrant workers have enabled me to observe their enhanced geographical knowledge, communicative skills, language proficiency, awareness about lifestyles and cultural practices solely due to their varied experiences. Thus, their adaptability and understanding of the world around them are distinctive.

Duration of attendance

A migrant child could enroll in the day care as early as few months old to twelve/fourteen years of age. The construction work pace of the builder leads to hiring and firing of labourers which in turn determines the number of children enrolled, thus affecting the child's duration of attendance. Some other reasons for a drop out could be a family's return to their village during harvest season or migrating to another construction site in hopes of a better prospect. The patterns of attendance vary from a few days to years in enrollment. Unpredictable attendance duration of each child is a key feature in the profile of most migrant children.

Strategies in curriculum planning

- The very basis of attendance issue puts the responsibility on the teacher/care giver to make every day matter by facilitating simple, small and interesting learning opportunities. It goes without saying “**Carpe Diem**” meaning **Seize the Day!**



- Every element in the **environment** like sand, stones, leaves; the life routines; natural phenomena's like rain, wind, sunlight and the ambience of machinery and tools of the construction site to which these children are connected become **great opportunities for teachers/care givers** to bring in the learning and teaching aspects.
- **Play oriented, print rich and resourceful ambience** are the key factors for acceptance and participation by the child.
- **Stress free and flexible classroom strategies** that of multicultural acceptance, bilingual approach, activity based modality that lets the child speak and share their understanding for better participation and learning are non-negotiables.
- **Being compassionate** to each child who arrives at the day care is a must as they have their own unique background in terms of mother tongue (enrollment from 15 to 17 states), previous schooling in indigenous language or exposure to anganwadis (nil to few years), first generation learners to literate parents and the noticeable erratic behaviour of survival in hardships.
- **Parental engagements** facilitated by the teachers/caregivers should build bridges to home learning. The enthusiasm among the marginalised parents must be channelized to help reduce the cycle of poverty and hardship.
- **Grouping** the children based on their acquired **language and math milestones** for better management and reach of the teacher are effective. The groups can be a graded as it helps children move from lower to higher level at their own pace (e.g. level 1/level 2/ level 3).
- **Short curriculum package** for each group/level that can be implemented by the teachers or care givers and acquired by the children within few weeks must be planned out. This concise curriculum facilitates easy integration into the group on enrollments that happen throughout the year. Over lapping of concepts in each group/level is required for practice, reiteration and better understanding to acquire mastery. It is often noticed each child moves at a different pace in language and a different one in math depending on their background of schooling, mother tongue, aptitude and interest.
- **A simple evaluation test** can be designed to test the entry and exit level of the child. Frequent absenteeism is a common feature thus realistic expectations of 50% to 70% performance in achieving the learning objectives should be considered for moving the child to the next group/level. Children below the set norms may continue in the same group however during the next cycle the teacher can use her discretion to retest and move the child. The analysis at the end of the cycle helps the teacher identify each child's abilities and gaps for further pursuance.
- While language and math concepts are taught in groups, other learning opportunities like **art & craft, circle time, read aloud time, games and field trips** are conducted in mixed groups thus facilitating learning among older and younger peers.

Although similar teaching and learning strategies are applied for all children, the predictable duration of attendance and strong home backgrounds help scale up learning with minimum hurdles for children in safe, secure and adequate environment.

A curriculum framework equipped with subject knowledge, skills, understanding and values that is organised in a sequential and systematical format for progressive learning and is aligned with play and inquiry based approaches to address the domains of development along with assessment practices for governance and achievement of learning outcomes will fulfill an institution's/ organisation's purpose and every child's learning and development.



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2. <http://ncpcr.gov.in/index1.php?lang=1&level=0&lid=33&linkid=17>

Rekha Menon is an ECD Consultant and Executive Committee member AECED National and Mumbai

A Parent-Teacher coordinated process of Assessment for 'Facilitating the transition of Children from Pre-primary to Primary Section '

**NCERT National Award winner Project by
Pre Primary Section, Saraswati Mandir Trust, Thane**

Good early childhood care and education has strong, long lasting, positive effects on children's development. Early learning experiences have a decisive impact on how children function as adults and subsequently on how they affect society. Positive experiences and warm responsive care can enhance brain development. Negative experiences can do the opposite. During these formative years, there are prime times for acquiring different kinds of knowledge and skills. To begin with preschool, which caters for children three to five years of age and continues to the primary school through the kindergarten. The transition between these two institutions is very significant. As children move from preschool to primary school, many are able to easily navigate the change but for some it can be quite daunting. This experience is perceived to have long term effects on their future development and learning, extending through all subsequent levels of education. Successful transitions enable children to adapt to new settings where they quickly grasp teaching and learning methods, the processes, rules and regulations which will enhance their performance in school. During the transition process, children experience a substantial shift in culture and are subjected to considerable demands which involve acclimatising to new environments, practitioners, peers, routines and levels of expectations. This can be challenging and adjustment to new circumstances is seen as critical to a successful transition. If children experience problems, they are more likely to continue this trend throughout their schooling. If they adjust quickly, much of the negative effects on their confidence and school behaviours can be overcome. We can also say that this transition from preschool to primary school sets the tone and direction in a child's school career. Coping well with the changes at this time is important since a successful start is associated with future progress and achievement. The child who transits smoothly is set on a more positive route than the child who experiences a negative transition. The passage at this significant juncture, and how the situation is negotiated, may have a lasting influence on how children view themselves, how others value them, their sense of well-being and their ability to learn. *Shifting to primary school not only involves the child, but requires the whole family to make adjustments and adapt to change. The family's contribution to socialising their child for primary school is very important.* Therefore, families are important to their children's transitions. At this critical point in the educational trajectory, which may determine failure or success, families must be significantly informed the transitioning process.

In the child's overall developmental stage, brain development is at its peak during the initial age of zero to five years and incidentally this period coincides with the child's entry into the pre-primary section. As the learning curve is at its peak during the phase, it is imperative that education imparted at this stage should contain various hands-on activities and creative, first-hand experiences. In other words , during this period of the highest possible growth of human brain,

informal but activity based education in the pre-primary section would facilitate a strong foundation for overall development of the child. So also more recent observations indicate that the preschool environment encourages active, child initiated learning. Children are encouraged to explore, while engaging in meaningful conversations with teachers who positively enhance their learning experience and their level of autonomy. In contrast, the primary school setting is not conducive to active learning. This is characterised by restrictive seating, high teacher-child ratio, little individualised attention to students, in addition to practices of drill repetition and memorisation, which do not encourage the development of critical thinking. There is little evidence to suggest that much has changed. There is thus an obvious disconnect between both institutions. Children have difficulty in orienting themselves upon transitioning and for many the task may prove difficult and overwhelming.

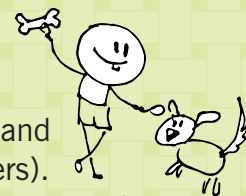
It is also observed that majority of the parents are unaware of the importance of these crucial years and they consider the pre-primary education as a mere preparatory base for the primary section. Therefore, when the child enters into the formal education system, i.e. the primary section, where she has to read and write, parents suddenly become aware of and anxious about the level of their child's reading and writing skills which creates an unnecessary stress on the child. Similarly, teachers in the primary section are also unaware of the language and arithmetic skills of the children entering into their sphere. It takes a few months for them to gauge the skill levels of a child and provide him help, in case needed, which in fact should have been provided at the very beginning of the academic year. In the pre-primary section, the performance of a child is evaluated only by her teacher. Parents get to know only the 'result' of this evaluation. In the formal educational system, a child has to answer a question paper in writing, which is a standard of evaluation. In an informal education system, parents are oblivious of the methods applied while evaluating their child. Consequently, children who are on a lower level of skill development in the areas of language or math while stepping into primary section have to face annoyance of their parents. For instance, if a child is not able to read and copy the homework written on a blackboard, she has to face wrath of her parents or even physical harm. Sometimes, in such a situation, parents become over-anxious. Such a vulnerable state of mind of parents is harmful for a small child of six years entering into primary section. A child may get frightened because of reaction of her parents, school atmosphere, and may in-effect dislike the school, may hate and loath the school and eventually, become a drop out. All such problems could arise out of non-adjustment of a child with the formal education system of the primary section.

On this background, the Marathi medium school Saraswati Mandir Trust, pre-primary section, located in Thane, Maharashtra has undertaken a student evaluation project, named '**Parents-teachers co-ordinated process of Assessment for facilitating the transition of children from Pre-primary to Primary Section**'. The main objective of the implementation of the project is 'Easy and Stress-free transition of children from pre-primary to primary section'.

We are proud to say that our **project has received National Award for the year 2015-16 in the competition held by NCERT named 'All India Competition on Innovative Practices and Experiments in education for schools and Teacher Education Institutes'**. Our school is successfully implementing this project since 2015-16 with the positive result of coordination between pre-primary and primary section and smooth transition of the children from one section to another. The project has following main objectives:

1. To make the transition of a child from pre-primary to primary section- easy, stress free and smooth.
2. To bring about a change in the mind-set of the teaching staff of pre-primary, primary sections and parents.

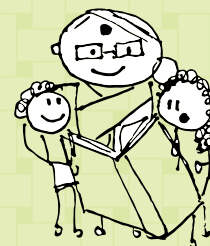
3. To make the parents aware of skills of their ward in respect of language (reading and writing) and maths (arithmetic concepts, introduction to and counting of numbers).
4. To guide the parents of children who have not achieved expected level of development, in a scientific manner, to develop those skills.
5. To apprise the teachers of the primary section about the skill levels of each child in the sphere of language and maths, so that each child could be guided as per her requirement.



To achieve the above objectives three pronged approach was followed as detailed below:

1. Child-School initiative – to achieve following development of a child these activities were initiated :

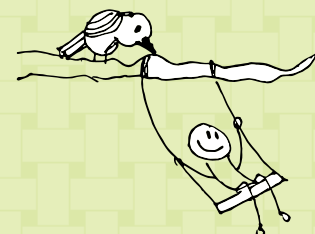
- Social and emotional development
- Mathematical concepts development
- Muscle development (through games)
- Language Development



These activities include various festivals and other class projects.

2. Parent- School Initiative – Through these initiatives parents could truly understand objectives of pre-primary education. They were also guided about enlightened parenthood and development of their children. Under the same project, a new scheme viz. e-board meeting was introduced for parents and primary teachers.

- **3. Parent-Child-school initiative** – Under this scheme, parents could participate in the school activities and could gauge the development of their child as also could assess her skill levels. Some of the new activities were undertaken within the scheme along with the old programmes were as under:
 - Books prepared by parents and children for the school
 - Celebration a Week of Colours and Halls of Colours
 - Class-wise parent teacher meets according to the roll numbers
 - Evaluation of ward – Parent teacher coordination
 - Saturday Classes
 - We are all set to enter the first Standard!



The overall result of all this can be summarized as Parents could clearly understand the development and skill levels of their child. Since performance of the child could be evaluated, his reading and writing skills could be assessed. Parents of those children, who were on the lower level of skill development, were guided in the activities of skill development. In the next evaluation round child's skills were observed to have improved. Entry of a child in the primary section was stress free.

Implementation of this project had shown positive change in the various parameters of the skill developments of the children .

If we considered Level 1 as Best Students, Level 2 as Students who needed help, Level 3 as Students who required help on priority basis then because of the implementation of the project, Level 1 (Best): Number of students in this category was enhanced. Improvement in: Language – 12%, Maths – 23%, writing skill– 5.5% . Level 3. (help on priority basis) Number of students in this category declined.

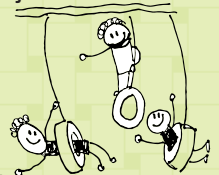
So also there was Decline in need for help in: Language – 4.5%, Maths – 5%, writing skill – 1%. In the month of March parent-teachers meetings were organised, according to the roll numbers, under the parent-child-school initiative especially for parents of those children who were about to

enter the first standard. Parents were again apprised of the skill levels of their wards. For those children who were lagging behind the expected level for their age, their parents were guided about the activities to be carried out during the months of April and June. As such, they could help their children as required as per her reading and writing skills right from the beginning of the first standard.

A report was forwarded to the primary section detailing skill levels of the children. As such, in the month of June when the children entered the first standard, primary section teachers could help them as per each child's needs.

We can Summarize the Project Outcome as follows -

- Due to active cooperation of parents and teachers entry of a child in primary section was pleasant and stress free.
- For smooth transition from pre-primary to primary, parents and primary teachers could help each other.
- As a result of this project parents and primary teachers could appreciate the objectives of pre-primary education.
- They also appreciated the need to understand various skill levels of the children.
- They also received guidance on how to help children as per skill levels.



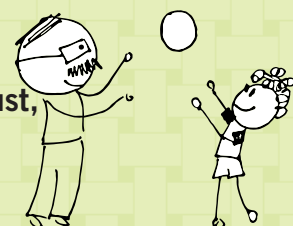
So also there are some Suggestions in order to make this project more result oriented:

- Parents should be made aware of the fact that for a stable development of a child, the skill development activities are to be carried out on a long term basis.
- Primary teachers need to be guided to understand and implement the detailed evaluation report.
- In order to gauge the efficacy of the various measures taken and to assess whether the transition was really smooth for the children, who were on the lower level of skill development an assessment should be undertaken after two months of stay in primary section.
- Results could be compared with other schools where no such project was implemented.

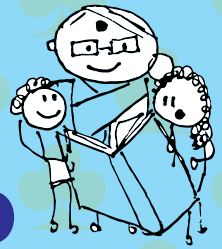
For the continuity of the Project it is imperative to build a system at institutional level. At least three joint meetings of pre-primary and primary sections should be organised during a year. Parents should be guided more effectively in respect of parent-child-school initiative. Committees formed for the project implementation should function more effectively.

Stronger partnerships between the home and school environments must be encouraged since family functioning has an enduring effect on children's academic performance as they embark on their educational journey. We believe and are now confident on seeing the positive results that with implementation of this project '**Parents-teachers co-ordinated process of Assessment for facilitating the transition of children from Pre-primary to Primary Section**' our school has succeeded in facilitating smooth and stress free transition of children from informal education system of pre-primary section to the formal education system of primary section.

Mrs. Rati Bhosekar is the Principal, Pre-Primary Section, Saraswati Mandir Trust, Thane



You can't pour from an Empty Cup



- Nisha Bhimani

Teacher – A Hero, a mentor, a role model, an idol, a guide and so many roles to keep up with while also being a spouse, a parent, a child, a friend and/ or a sibling. As satisfying and exciting it is being a teacher, equally demanding and stressful is the job. Teachers dedication and commitment towards their work can also work against their ability to cope with the stress created. Common mental health concerns arise from stressors in life as well as pressure from work – and this stands true for teachers as well.

One in ten teachers taking antidepressants to cope with work stresses, six in 10 teachers say their job has impacted on their mental health in the past 12 months – Headlines like these in the newspaper are now becoming more and more common. As a profession, teaching is plagued by significant turnover, often attributed to burnout, with documented rates of teacher turnover rising in public schools over the past decade (Ingersoll, 2001; NCES, 2011). Mental Health is a topic of taboo and is often not spoken about in many cultures, especially when its linked to the profession of teaching and teachers. The Education Sector Health Survey 2015 makes utterly depressing reading. It reveals that schools are currently facing 'an epidemic' of mental health issues as '84% of those working in education admit to suffering problems, with workload to blame in 81% of cases'. We can deny it all we like, but the fact remains. Mental health among education staff is apparently shockingly poor.

Various factors contribute and lead to causing mental health concerns. Environmental factors play a huge role in the cause and manifestation of mental health concerns. Long working hours, loud noisy classroom environment, constant pressure to problem solve, classroom management, dealing with difficult students, team dynamics of staff etc, all contribute to make or break the sanity of the teacher. Though often felt to be an uncomfortable issue to deal with, all educators must become increasingly aware of the problem and be willing to work towards greater mental health of all teachers.

Every teacher should take responsibility to work towards their own mental health wellbeing. Consistent stress and worry can also prevent teachers from giving their best to the children they teach. Delays in identifying and tackling signs of common mental health problems can have an impact on personal wellbeing and the good of the school. Early intervention can also help staff stay at work while they work on their concerns, and following a period of absence, return to work and full teaching capacity sooner than would otherwise occur – which benefits both the teacher and the school. Being in a positive state of mind would eventually reflect in their class, kids and their personal satisfaction as well.

There are many ways in which individuals in the teaching and educating profession can work on keeping positive mental health

- 1. Time management :** important to have Timetables not only for your class but also for yourself to ensure you eat meals and drink enough liquid during your working hours. Get enough goodnight sleep.
- 2. Posture :** maintain a good posture while correcting student work, making lesson plans on the computer, and /or standing in class while teaching for hours together
- 3. Family time :** ensure not to discuss work events, or work on school tasks when with sitting and spending time with your family and loved ones

4. **Stretch** : Don't forget to stretch and move around every 30mins while sitting for long periods of time checking student work or designing planning classwork
5. **ME time** : Ensure some me time during the day or week to relax and calm yourself down
6. **Do not take it personally** : don't let a difficult student, parent, co-worker make you feel you "inadequate". Their shortcomings don't define your ability.
7. **Plan: plan ahead of time and have back** : up plans to reduce stress and anxiety at any given point
8. **Take a Break** : whether it is 5mins from a difficult class or a couple of days off from school- take that time off to rejuvenate and come back fresh.
9. **Seek out a colleague's assistance** : have someone to give you a hand when in need, work on building cordial work place relationships
10. **Refrain from discussing students**, parents, and colleagues with co-workers to avoid any friction that could lead to stress
11. **Spend time chatting and interacting** with the difficult kids to understand and know them better, this will help you deal with them better and lead to less stress and friction in class
12. **Be flexible** : don't be too harsh on yourself and give flexibility to self to explore and experiment.
13. **Go for upgrading and professional development sessions** : this helps one relieve the work stress and feel doubted of one's capacity.
14. **Be open to feedback** : ask for feedback and use it constructively
15. **Practice gratitude daily** : helping you focus on the good than the bad
16. **Learn to say 'NO' and be Assertive** : practice saying no to avoid taking too much on your plate
17. **Read thank you notes and letters** given by students/colleagues when feeling low
18. **Promote** mental health at your work place
19. **Practice** positive mental health by advocating and role modelling to create a positive space at work
20. **LOVE YOURSELF FOR WHAT YOU DO**

Teacher's mental health is a priority not only for themselves but also since teachers are better able to connect with students and thus by modelling healthy ways of dealing with stress they empower students to work in a similar direction. Building mentally healthy teachers, who can subsequently build emotionally healthy students, is a benefit that many in the education community have taken seriously.

References :

Mental health and the teacher. J Sch Health Miller DF, Wiltse J. 1979 Sep;49(7):374-7.
https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/pdf/Educators_Commom_Mental_Health_Problems_Guide_and_Tools_UK_Resource.pdf

Nisha Bhimani is a trained counselor and a mental health professional working out of Canada these days.

Pen a Poem

"Desiderata" (Latin: "desired things")

Is a 1927 prose poem by American writer Max Ehrmann. Largely unknown in the author's lifetime, the text became widely known after its use in devotional and spoken-word recordings in 1971 and 1972.

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.

As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons.

Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.

Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery.

But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.

Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. **You are a child of the universe** no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here.

And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world.

Quote Unquote



"The active ingredient in the environment that's having an influence on development is the quality of the relationships that children have with the important people in their lives. That's what it's all about".

- Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D.



"The **first five years** have so much to do with how the next 80 turn out."

Brought to you by
the **Ounce**
ounceofprevention.org

- Bill Gates Sr., Co-Chair
of the Bill and Melinda
Gates Foundation

Sound bytes

Young Voices from the Field

Prabha Poddar

What are your hopes for young children?

Prabha hopes to see confident children, free from any complexes that are willing to work hard for themselves to achieve anything instead of being dependent on their parents.

What inspired you to join early childhood?

I use to see many children around my vicinity and saw different behavioral patterns among them. I was always curious to study and know what exactly made them behave in that way or what type of training should be given to them to make them better individuals in the future.

Surabhi Ghiya

What are your hopes for young children?

Surabhi hopes that young children are inclined towards physical activities rather than screen time.

What inspired you to join early childhood?

Early childhood is the best period in a child's life- it's The Building Block. I was inspired to teach young children because of their innocence, which is magical.

Apexa Pancholi

What are your hopes for young children?

Children should be prepared for the future and should be able to adjust well with others

What inspired you to join early childhood?

I have been inspired by my children. Being a mother, I have enjoyed my own children's childhood. Now want to contribute to the growth of other children

Sowmya Nair

What are your hopes for young children?

I hope more and more parents let their children just "Be" themselves. Our next generation needs a strong message of loving and caring for humanity and environment together!

What inspired you to join early childhood? (ECED)

To do my bit in molding and shaping a few good human beings for this earth who just don't live by numbers or success rather to share, love and care for even the smaller beauties of life.

Anjali Rajnani

What are your hopes for young children?

Young children must blossom well and achieve their maximum potential. I would like to see happy, confident, content, kind and children with right attitude and values ingrained in them. I really wish that Indian core values along with their individual talents shine through and bring pride and recognition that our country deserves.

What inspired you to join early childhood?

To make a difference in lives of children and their parents by being a mentor and nurturer in the very important and sensitive phase when the child just begins his educational journey.

Archana Shah

What are your hopes for young children?

I feel as an early childhood teacher we are making our society and our country future ready. I hope to see children as independent, positive, kind, confident, responsible beings.

What inspired you to join early childhood?

I like the company of young children. I want to do something for my society and it's a very good medium to do so. I want to learn and understand children's behavior and how to deal with them.

Sanyogeeta Mahale

What are your hopes for young children?

The younger society should be energetic, enthusiastic, and eager to learn. They should have love and respect for all and ready to face the challenges bravely and wisely.

What inspired you to join early childhood?

To know the psychology of children in their early years- to know what is the right age to nurture them for the future.

Rekha Singh

What are your hopes for young children?

My hope for young children is they should be energetic; they should have the attitude of sharing and caring.

What inspired you to join early childhood?

My attitude towards children inspires me to join ECD as I like to be with children, being around them and creating happy and relaxed moments. I love to know more about children how and what they are thinking and how I can help them to become good human beings with a positive attitude.

Ankita Joshi

What are your hopes for young children?

My hopes for young children are that young children should actively participate in activities. My children should be happy in what they are doing.

What inspired you to join early childhood? (ECED)

My inspiration to join ECD is to be with kids. It gives me great pleasure, and joy to be with children.

Khushbu Shroff

What are your hopes for young children?

My hope for young ones is to make them good human beings with real values

What inspired you to join early childhood?

I was always waiting for window of opportunity for my personal growth and professional development. So I think this will help me in all terms.

Mudita

What are your hopes for young children?
To see them / help them grow up as loving, responsible, sensitive individuals.

What inspired you to join early childhood? (ECED)

I remember my teacher from Jr. KG who never gave up on me. I want to be the same for my students.



Archana Shah
Anjali,
Khushboo



Apexa
Prabha



Sowmya
Mudita

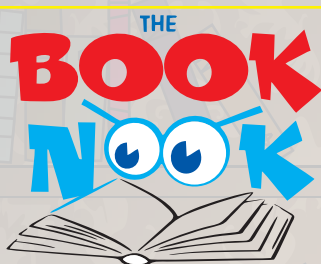


Ankita
Surbhi



Rekha
Sanyogita

Archana Jamdar runs a one year Diploma ECD at Chaturbhuj Narsee School. These are trainees voices as they pursue their diploma.



"Reading through this book provides a framework, a canvas if you will, you can use to develop your program/painting to represent the richness and complexity of your staff, children and families. This book is foundational to the rich tapestry of our work." --Kristie Norwood, education coordinator, Ounce of Prevention.

"Important questions appear at the very beginning of this thought-provoking book: What do we believe the purpose of education to be? What is quality? Who gets to decide? In Carter and Curtis' usual friendly, accessible, and encouraging style, this second edition of Learning Together with Young Children then leads us from big questions to our everyday challenges, to core principles, and then on to practical and vivid examples of how teachers have learned alongside and with children to 'live fully and teach well.'" --Susan Stacey, author of Emergent Curriculum in Early Childhood Settings.

"Drawing from the latest discoveries on brain development, holistic education, anti-bias curricula, and teacher research this book is a must-have for new or experienced early childhood educators, coaches, administrators and policy makers. It offers inspirational stories from real classrooms where school communities have transformed not only their environments, but the way they envision the educational experience for young children and their families."--Isauro M. Escamilla, NAEYC Governing Board member

About the Authors

For more than 30 years, both Margie Carter and Deb Curtis have worked in the early childhood field, including positions as a Head Start education coordinator, preschool teacher, and college instructor. Margie Carter and Deb Curtis have coauthored seven books, including Designs for Living and Learning. They speak to and consult with childcare organizations across the U.S., Canada, and Australia.

Learning Together with Young Children

A Curriculum Framework for Reflective Teachers



Deb Curtis and Margie Carter

My feedback about the book

I have personally been using the book since the past 5-6 years and find it a valuable resource for all teachers, administrators, school heads in understanding Early childhood curriculum and its impact.

Full of beautiful images – the photos just inspire you to design rich, engaging environments. The text too is so inspiring – filled with stories and observations about children and learning.

Highly recommend this book for expanding your understanding of Curriculum.

The book provides early childhood teachers a framework for collaborating with children to create a dynamic, emergent curriculum.

Archana Jamdar

ECD Consultant

Founder- Inspired Learning;

Executive Committee

Member of AECED National and Mumbai

Print and Post

The Physical Environment Quality Indicators- checklist at a glance

Quality Indicators	Remarks
1. Divide the classroom spaces into well-defined learning areas e.g.: block play, role play, puzzle play, art corner, library corner	
2. Teachers should arrange class room furniture such that all children can be supervised from any point	
3. Use open ended material and displays e.g. pebbles, twigs, pine cones, shells, toilet roll, tetra packs, cereal boxes, books, dolls, props, puzzles, music, photos, cartons, dupattas, scarves etc	
4. Store most materials on low shelves where children can take them out independently and return them when finished	
5. All toys and books should be maintained in good condition puzzles have all pieces, books are not torn, dolls are clothed with no broken parts, outdoor equipment is safe with no sharp edges, and all toys/equipment are in working conditions	
6. Teachers to label all toys and play materials so that children begin to associate the written labels - using pictures/photos and labels	
7. Teachers to encourage lot of observational drawings and scribbles and emergent writing samples consisting primarily of children's original artwork and writing samples, at the children's eye level	
8. Teachers to use lots of photographs of children at work or play capturing learning opportunities. Also use photographs with their families	
9. Teachers to make the classroom comfortable and attractive: Good lighting- natural light, lamps Soft textures e.g., stuffed chairs, cushions, rugs, stuffed animals, baskets Quiet, cozy spaces e.g., lofts, tents, Homelike touches – use of flowers, curtains, tablecloths, photo albums and living things e.g., plants	
10. Display all emergency numbers at reception- fire station, police station, doctor on call, hospital etc	

Adapted from Creative Curriculum

Cook, Toss, Stir and Chomp!

Strawberry Smoothie It's the strawberry season!

What you will need

Fresh strawberries- 2 cups
Orange juice – 1/4th cup
Fresh yogurt – 1/2 cup
Honey – 1 teaspoon
Strawberry – for garnish
Tall glass – to serve



How to make

- Allow children to wash and chop strawberries into small pieces
- Let them measure orange juice and pour into their own tall glasses
- Add the chopped strawberries and juice in the blender.
- Mix well.
- Add the fresh yogurt and honey
- Blend again
- Serve immediately in glasses
- Garnish with strawberry on top



adapted from <http://www.kids-cooking-activities.com/Popsicle-recipes.html>

AECED Updates

We had a super national conference in 2015 and the report on the same is finally out and shared on the website (*also note our website is under construction so apologies for the bare minimum there*).



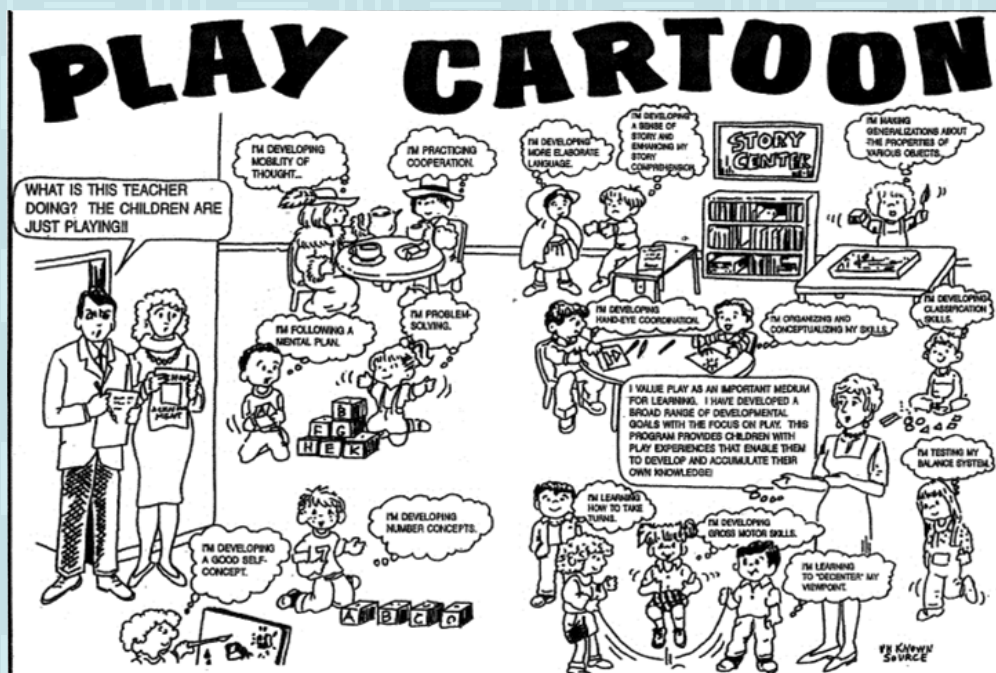
Please access the report by using the hyperlink below:
<http://www.mumbaiaeced.org/RedefiningECDinIndiaReport-FinalcopyDec17.pdf>

We have had a great response to the three workshops already held this academic year. Thank you for your enthusiastic participation in the same. The last one for the year focusing on art is just round the corner. Do register and secure your presence if you have not already. Please check

<http://www.mumbaiaeced.org/Flier-workshop-2017-2018.pdf>
for more details.

Final Word

A well planned curriculum for early years in motion gives at a glance a reaction such as the one depicted in the very apt play cartoon below and then as you delve deeper, you realise the extent of learning and development ensuing in these extremely critical years. We can hear the neurons firing and wiring away in such a learning environment...



Upcoming Workshops

Workshop Date	Workshop Title	Facilitator
Friday & Saturday, 23rd -24th February 2018	Power of the "Arts" in Practice	Oihika Chakrabarti

Registration & Breakfast - 9:00 am to 9: 30 am

Workshop timing - 9:30 am to 3.30pm

For further details click www.mumbaiaeced.org

MEMBERSHIP

The Annual Membership of AECED Mumbai (2017-2018) is open.

Please do renew (if applicable) and pass the buzz to help the ECD network grow.

Individual Membership

- 1) 1 year – Rs.500/-
- 2) 3 years – Rs.1,200/-
- 3) 5 years – Rs.2,000/-

Institutional Membership

- 1) 1 year - Rs.1,000/-
- 2) 3 years - Rs.2,500/-
- 3) 5 years - Rs.4,000/-

Special offers on Membership

- All members will receive a unique Registration Number
- 1 year membership** will receive a curriculum book for ECE programs designed by the Chennai branch of AECED.
- 3 years membership** will receive the curriculum book plus Melody Times CD – a compilation of songs on different concepts by professionals from the field of ECCE from Mumbai – a tool for every teacher.
- 5 years membership** will receive the above two plus "Learning to Play" calendar by Hincks Dellcrest Centre, Toronto and BalaMandir Research Foundation, Chennai -a set of 3 books illustrates the different stages of the child from birth to 6 years and suitable activities for the child at each stage.

AECED Mumbai

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Reg. No. F- 42514

